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homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Wednesday, June 10, 1942

SUBJECT: "Wood in the Home." Information from wood experts of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The time has come, the walrus said, to speak of many things:

Of ships and planes and shoelace tabs, wood toys and wooden rings.

That isn't exactly what the walrus said but what he might have said if he had known the number of ways in which wood is taking the place of metals, particularly in the home.

For one thing, more wood is going into furniture now that less metal is being furniture manufactured. Wood is going into kitchen cabinets and kitchen tables. Knotty pines or fir with a natural grain lends a cosy atmosphere to the home and homemakers know wood in the kitchen is easy to keep clean, once it's been shellacked and waxed. Wood has another point in its favor. It ages gracefully.

Construction limitations due to wartime restrictions in the use of materials and labor have not hurt the appearance of the new furniture. In fact, many new types have an air of graceful lightness. For example, plywood is showing up to good advantage in table tops.

Speaking of furniture, a woman who is handy with hammer and nails can make useful pieces of furniture from wood. Various members of the family will enjoy adding the finishing touches, such as bright colored chintz or varnish. And if you're short of lumber, you can rig up a combination table and book shelf from a barrel. That's exactly what a homemaker in Washington, D. C., did the other day. And many a young miss, longing for a fancy dressing table like those she sees in the movies, can make her own from a wooden box or berry crate by covering one end with flowered material and putting a glass slab over it. The same material makes a fancy "skirt".

for the front of the dressing table, when the plain end rests on the floor.

We may all find ourselves going in for furniture making in a big way before ong, as more and more makers of furniture all over the country change over their ools and facilities to produce wooden airplanes, gliders, and other war items. At east 3 woodworking furniture plants are now manufacturing airplane parts of plywood, nd 12 or more other companies will soon be producing wooden airplanes and sub- ssemblies. Metal furniture companies are also turning out war equipment. Of course, he industry will continue to make types of furniture needed by the armed services ere and abroad.

From now on you'll be seeing more and more articles for the house made of wood. desk
Walnut wood may substitute for bronze in/lamps. Even drawer pulls and wooden curtain poles, brackets and rings are replacing metal ones, to say nothing of wooden door- nobs and latches. Coat hangers may be all wood from now on -- wooden hangers with wooden hooks. A wooden hanger has several advantages over metal hangers. It doesn't leave marks when clothes are jammed close together, and it doesn't rust and stain clothes.

Wood is replacing steel in window sashes, tool boxes, and bedspring frames.

Wood is easy to take care of if you just remember that it is porous. Un- finished wood absorbs moisture easily. A wooden washtub in its natural state has a tendency to shrink, but if it is kept full of water, the wood absorbs enough water to prevent shrinkage, which, in turn, keeps the washtub from leaking. But in other wood articles this absorbing of moisture makes wood swell and warp or bulge. That's why drawers stick in hot moist weather. To prevent this, put a finish on the wood to seal the pores.

Another property of wood is that it's a poor conductor of heat. For that reason, a long-handled spoon used in cooking is less likely to burn the cook's fin- gers if the spoon has a wooden handle, instead of one made of metal.

In the Green Mountains of Vermont, two young craftsmen are producing exquisite trays made from solid yellow mountain birch, hand-turned. The beautiful grain of the wood, differing in every piece, makes each one an original. The trays will take the place of those handy wire baskets designed for passing beverage glasses. One attractive tray has three wells along opposite sides, providing places for six glasses. A rectangular place in the center might hold cookies or sandwiches. The trays shine with a satin luster finish that is resistant to all kinds of beverages. The craftsmen have other pieces to match the trays, such as salad bowls, wooden forks, candlesticks, salt and pepper shakers, pickle and relish dishes, with forks, and crumb sets.

Such pieces should never be put in a dish pan or be subjected to hot water or strong soap. A damp cloth is best for cleaning them. With proper care, this tableware of wood gives years of service.

Handles of toothbrushes, hairbrushes, and general household utensils, instead of being made of metal, are likely to be of wood or wood plastic and equally as dainty and serviceable. Stands, racks, letter openers, wardrobes, fluted sink drainboards, stools and boxes to fill homemakers' needs will also be made of wood.

Wooden toys instead of toys made of cast iron or rubber will delight the children. There are toy soldiers, doll furniture, construction sets and similar gadgets, all made of wood. Wood cellulose is also going into shoelace tabs. In the future, technicians tell us that new materials derived from wood will be even stronger and better than wood in its original form.

Wood may even take its place in the modern Saturday night routine. After all, Grandpa took his bath in a half hogshead. (Written by Dorothy Rowe)

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